

State Senator
Andrew Roraback



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On April 17th in Winsted, Dr. Barbara Douglass, President of Northwestern Connecticut Community Technical College, joins Andrew and other state officials in a ceremonial groundbreaking for the new \$9.6 million Arts and Sciences building now under construction at the College.

Teachers' Retirement Fund Receives Substantial Support

As a member of the Education Committee, I was disappointed that the legislature did not pass a constitutional resolution I co-sponsored to require full funding of Connecticut's Teachers' Retirement Fund. Such a resolution is needed to avoid passing on today's financial obligation to future generations. There was, however, some good news to report on this front as the legislature committed \$246 million of the surplus to fully fund the Teachers' Retirement Fund for the next two years. Only once in the past 25 years has the General Assembly lived up to our responsibility to do this. As such, we now confront a deficit in the Fund of over \$5 billion.



Andrew and other Brookfield officials break ground for the \$31 million expansion at Brookfield High School. The state will contribute approximately \$7 million towards this long awaited project.

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State Senator **Andrew Roraback**

Dear Friend,

The 2006 session of the Connecticut General Assembly ended May 3rd. It was my sixth year as state senator, and I was pleased that the legislature adjourned on time and with a responsible budget with a spending increase limited to 5.8%.

Since becoming Governor on July 1, 2004, Governor Rell has provided leadership which has helped to restore the faith of the people of Connecticut in the integrity of our state government. Given the tumultuous times which preceded her assuming the Office of Governor, there has been no more important responsibility for all elected officials than rebuilding the public trust, without which it is impossible to govern effectively.

As your state senator, I have worked hard to try to keep you informed about the work your state government is doing. This legislative report summarizes some of the major actions taken during this year's legislative session. I hope you will find it interesting and informative. I also hope you will consider signing up for my periodic e-mail newsletter which provides updates on legislative activities in Hartford.

If you would like to sign up to receive this newsletter, please visit www.senaterepublicans.ct.gov, and click on my homepage and then click on "newsletter."

If you have questions about the legislation discussed in this report or any other matter concerning state government, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to represent you in Hartford.

Sincerely,

Andrew



Budget Adjustments Bring Assistance to Towns and Reflect Changing Priorities to Improve Business Climate and Meet Evolving Human Service Needs

The 2006 session of the General Assembly was a "short session" in which we made several adjustments to the two year budget that passed in 2005. We also provided for the disposition of the surplus for fiscal year 2006 which ended June 30th, and which is expected to exceed \$900 million.

There can be no dispute that Connecticut must be competitive in the global marketplace in order to retain and attract business. I am pleased to report that, in an attempt to spur economic activity and the employment that accompanies such activity, the legislature took several important steps in the 2006 session. First, we began phasing out the property tax on manufacturing equipment and machinery – an important change which had long been sought by business leaders in Connecticut. Most neighboring states have no such tax, and our elimination of this assessment will provide relief for Connecticut manufacturers. In addition, the income tax surcharge which had been placed on businesses when our budget was running a deficit was also eliminated, sending the clear message that we want to help Connecticut businesses grow and prosper.

Our budget also invested in meeting many critical human service needs, which are a core function of government. Specifically, in response to declining Federal support for our Meals on Wheels service, we added \$800,000 in new funding to avoid reductions in this vital program. We also targeted \$20 million in new support to school districts to help pay the rising costs of special education. In addition, this budget funded a \$1 million pilot program to begin providing services to adults with autism. Connecticut is far behind most states in providing needed supports for the growing number of young adults living with this condition.

Finally, because all towns are struggling to control the growing burden of the property tax on Connecticut families, the legislature turned back \$33 million of the surplus to municipalities to assist them in balancing their tight budgets. The balance of the surplus was used to pay off debt, increase the balance in the Rainy Day Fund, and to make the full contribution to the Teachers' Retirement Fund discussed elsewhere in this report.

On balance, I believe our budget adjustments will serve the people of Connecticut well over the next year.



Andrew and Dr. Minakshi Tikoo from the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services help serve at a benefit pasta supper held at Prime Time House in Torrington on May 18th.

New Laws Give Towns More Options to Support Affordable Housing and Open Space Preservation

Effective October 1, 2006, Connecticut municipalities will have the authority to enact local ordinances that will promote the development of additional housing opportunities which are affordable, and which will enable towns to adopt more creative approaches to open space preservation.

With the dramatic rise in property values in recent years, many local people find it impossible to remain in the communities which have been home to their families for generations. These individuals are often those who form the backbone of a town's civic life, giving generously of their time and talent on behalf of countless volunteer organizations. Public Act 06-97 will permit towns to amend their zoning regulations to provide property owners with a chance to sever a building lot from their property without the need for securing subdivision approval, provided the lot in question meets all applicable zoning regulations for the area. These lots must be acquired by the town or a non-profit organization and used for the purpose of building affordable homes. I am enthusiastic about the prospect of towns in the 30th District taking advantage of the new mechanism to address an increasingly critical need.

I have long advocated for the state to make a much more substantial investment in preserving what remains of Connecticut's vanishing farmland and in the open spaces which provide so many benefits to the quality of life enjoyed by all in Connecticut. We have much more to do in this area, but the General Assembly did take a small step this year by giving towns a new tool to preserve open space and farmland locally.

Public Act 06-128 will enable towns to adopt ordinances which will grant those who donate conservation easements or development rights on their property to the town, an abatement of their property taxes over a period of years on other property owned by them. Towns will be free to craft ordinances which fit the particular needs of their communities and will have another useful mechanism to promote land conservation locally.



Andrew joins Kedryn Sampson of Cornwall in testifying before the Education Committee. Kedryn was a winner of the "Who Wants To Change The World?" Essay Contest Andrew sponsored. Connecticut is one of only two states that allow 4 year olds to enter kindergarten in September if they will turn 5 before January 1st. Kedryn was advocating to move that date back to September 15th.



Andrew and Kevin Moran of the United Water Company celebrated New Milford's historic purchase of the 170 acre reservoir property for \$1.9 million. The state's Open Space Matching Grant Program contributed \$450,000 to this important conservation initiative.

After 12 Years, Perfect Attendance Streak Continues

Since beginning his service in the General Assembly on January 4, 1995, Senator Roraback has cast 5770 consecutive votes and has been present for every vote taken in his twelve legislative sessions. Senator Roraback, who served three terms in the House, and is now serving his sixth year in the Senate, is the only member of the General Assembly with this record.

* Legislative rules have required Senator Roraback to abstain from six votes taken in the twelve years he has served.